



DEVILS RIVER CONSERVANCY

Treasure. Preserve. Protect.

September 23, 2020

The Honorable Lyle Larson
House Natural Resources Committee
Via email: Shannon.Houston_HC@house.texas.gov

Re: House Natural Resources Committee Request for Public Comment

Dear Chairman Larson and Committee Members,

Thank you for requesting information and comments ***regarding emerging issues in groundwater and surface water interaction, in particular in areas of increasing competition for scarce resources.***

As drought cycles continue to worsen in Western Texas, scarce water resources are under increasing pressure by growing municipal, energy and agricultural needs. Inevitably, our few undeveloped regions, such as Val Verde County, have caught the eye of thirsty municipalities and industries. Increased groundwater pumping in the Devils River watershed, in tandem with drought, has measurably impacted the surface water flows of the Devils River. The 100% spring fed flows of the Devils River are critical to the economy and health of Val Verde County and the lower Rio Grande Valley, as the Devils River provides one third (1/3) of the freshwater flows below Amistad Dam.

Texas' current groundwater legal framework does not protect our surface water resources. The Devils River, one of our last pristine surface water resources, and the groundwaters that feed the river, are unprotected from large scale groundwater pumping.

Additional modeling of surface and groundwater, alongside policy changes to support integrated resource management, is critical to protect our limited water resources.

Areas with complex groundwater flows, groundwater to surface water communication, and multiple watersheds may require a multi-pronged approach. For example, identifying environmental flow standards and spring flow triggers within a hydrologically defined management area may protect river flows for all users.

It is time for our laws to reflect the scientific knowledge we have gained over the last several decades.

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We appreciate the Committee's interest in this topic and urge your consideration and pursuit of holistic water resource management for the protection of our precious water resources. We want to ensure future generations of Texans can enjoy the wild Devils River as we do today.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Randy Nunns". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Randy Nunns
Board President